

Methods and Theory.
Spring, 1969, Aruba.
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The Portuguese of Aruba, Netherlands Antilles.

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Very good!



On the island of Aruba in the Netherlands Antilles there have been waves of immigration at different times during the last three centuries. The reasons for such movements have been a combination of economic and social pressures both within and without the island itself. In the case of the Portuguese immigrants coming to the Netherlands Antilles several patterns can be identified and correlated to definite religious and economic origins in Europe and the islands. In this short study an attempt has been made to discuss the Portuguese community as a whole; the purpose of their coming, the positions they hold and the ways in which they achieved them, the attitudes held by them, their status in Aruba and the opinions the Arubans have of them. In addition the language situation will be considered with the knowledge that the Portuguese have little difficulty in learning the Papiamentu spoken on the island owing to the historical linguistic origin of the creole language.

The methodology was designed so as to allow for intermittent interviewing which began February 21 and continued up until April 29 during which time twelve interviews were logged. The people questioned ran a gamut of island inhabitants; both educated professional and illiterate immigrants provided information for the study in which Portuguese and non-Portuguese partook. At each interview rough notes were taken which were then later typed as formal notes at the Research Center. Several books were consulted especially in regard to the Portuguese origins of Papiamentu and are listed in the bibliography but for the most part the paper consists of original research and is a collective result of discussion of questions asked of local people. Using the data of interviews, statistics and ling-

istics drawn from grammar book and dictionary the body of the paper was written in the evolutionar, approach style with the realization that two factors limited the study to some extent; these being the inability of the writer to speak either Portuguese or Papiamentu, and the acknowledgement that more interviews with Portuguese people themselves would have been beneficial, however they were hard to locate and even harder to talk with due to language barriers.

The immigration of the Portuguese can be traced as far back as the fifteenth century. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492 there were numbers of Sephardic Jews who fled to Brazil and there settled until the Spanish and Portuguese entered as colonists in the sixteenth century and forced them to emigrate once more. Also from Iberia were those Jews who departed for Holland, known for its religious toleration at that time but owing to the too cool climate sailed for the Lesser Antilles when the Dutch assumed control in 1634. The islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao became hosts to the immigrants; the last island was to become the home of the first most influential Jewish community in the New World as the Sephardic Jews in Aruba never numbered more than a handful whereas in Curacao, the businesses of Willemstad flourished under Jewish hands backed by European Dutch capital. Jewish merchants became based there while Aruba was still however part of their marketing source; even today Jewish business with Curacaon roots has a strong hold of Aruba, for example the Maduro and Caril firms. So ~~these~~^{such} were the first contacts the island had with the Portuguese, the next were to be met much later, in the twentieth century.

The seventeenth century movements to the New World had been for the most part the result of the religious ferment in Europe but

In the twentieth century the catalyst was economic frustrations, factors which are in this historical context of the present capitalistic development in development of capital investment. With the rise of the oil-industry resulting from the discovery of massive oil-reserves in northern Venezuela, came the building of large oil refineries on the islands of Curacao and Aruba. On the former the Royal Shell Company Refinery was constructed during the mid 1920's while on Aruba the Standard Oil Refinery of the Esso subsidiary came into being as the Lago Refinery in 1929. On both islands there soon ~~developed~~^{grew} a problem of a lack of labor; local populations were small and in the case of Aruba especially, the locals were unwilling to work the menial tasks such as oil-drum haulage, pipe-laying, cleaning jobs and the like. As a consequence in the 1930's Shell began importing labor from Europe both skilled and unskilled to satisfy the need. The unskilled immigrants were mostly from Eastern Europe, but numbers increased from Italy and Portugal. Lago soon followed suit but did not directly encourage immigration to the oil-refinery itself as did Shell on Curacao; the Dutch government at that time introduced employment advertisements for work in the Public Works Department on the island of Aruba. Once on the island many of the Portuguese transferred from Public Works to positions at Lago which proved to be a little more lucrative. At the same time Portuguese immigrants to Curacao left in small numbers to enter Aruban government positions in order to avoid the competition on the labor market from the heavy black immigration arriving in Curacao. The Portuguese thus began entering the Lesser Antilles in the 1930's and continued to do so up until the late 1950's; the majority of the immigrants arrived poor and illiterate, from that part of Portugal known as Madeira, wanting primarily to earn enough for a return journey.

and there buy a ~~lot~~ of land. They came initially to government employment, managing the sweeping of streets, garbage collections - the menial tasks which Arubans found beneath them to perform; later the trend was to enter the oil-refinery and work in the lower positions. By the end of the war Portuguese workers began moving out into independent business; men started operating small-time refreshment concessions such as ice-cream selling, bakeries and cafes, while gardening became known as their side occupation. It is noticeable that after talking to some Portuguese members of the Oranjestad community that those who immigrated in the 1950's entered such private business on the invitation of family relatives already resident on the island. Thus the Catholic immigrants of Portugal of a much later era than those of the Jews soon acknowledged that commercial opportunities ^{were} a means of upward mobility in Antillean society just as their Jewish counterparts had done.

Today the Portuguese community ^{has} is only two hundred and fifty-three of them on the island according to the 1964 census and two hundred and seventy according to the Immigration Office count of 1969; the largest number accounted for was during the 1945-55 period when there were approximately three hundred and fifty persons of Portuguese origin. Before the war the entrance requirements were simple enough to fulfill precisely because the need for labor was so pressing but the work permits were mandatory regulations since proof of guaranteed employment had to be shown at the port of entry. The Consul for Portugal in Aruba explained that in most instances the oil-refinery started positions before the immigrants' arrival in Aruba; there was also no guarantee of works appointments since they were permanent positions. In the cases of independent business the immigrant had relatives work for him in family connected concerns. In a work

permit two references were necessary and a new permit was required for each new employment position taken. Before actually entering the Netherlands Antilles the permit had to be completed by the Portuguese Consul and was then returned to the applicant before he left for the islands. Most of the Portuguese being of limited means arrived by boat.

The Portuguese people interviewed were not extensively educated and spoke little or no English. Four of the five spoken to arrived in Aruba in the 1950's and one in the 1930's; only two began as workers in the government. When asked as to why they came, all mentioned the fact that the Dutch government had publicized employment and that in Madeira, a rural poverty-stricken area, work with a living wage had become almost non-existent. Two of those interviewed had arranged work with the Public Works Department before entry while two had had relatives vouching for shop-work, and the last arrived as a minor with his parents. Considering the lack of funds or financial securities held by these immigrants it would seem logical that perhaps a group or aid society was available in Portugal or Aruba for immigration advice and backing; on questioning it was found that there was not, but that through strong family ties both in Madeira and in Aruba, savings were sufficient to cover passage fares while contacts with relatives business provided capital for the initial set-ups.

According to common Aruban talk, the Portuguese is hard-working, ambitious and ashamed of no task; after the original influx of the Portuguese into the refinery of Curacao there were many who shifted to Aruba where as already described, street-cleaning and garnishing, peddling, ice-cream wagons and "making" "refresqueras" became the accepted occupations of the people. The immigration files reveal that

the majority of the Portuguese residents are (now) employed in refrescerias and as ice-cream sellers still, whereas the positions in the government departments have been lost to the native Aruban for reasons explained later. But there are, as in other minority groups some who struck out and have climbed to higher rungs. An example of this is that of the Portuguese born of parents in Aruba before the war and who are legally Dutch citizens and have benefitted from the completed education in Aruba and Holland. They are now in government positions of consequence, in law and in teaching, however these do not number more than a dozen. In the way of business it is of interest to note that the owner of the Basi-Buti Restaurant, Oranjestad, is a successful eating place, is owned by a Portuguese and that the manager of the Aruba-Caribbean, one of the two main hotels on the island is also of the nationality. According to a statistical break-down from the immigration files a hundred and seven Portuguese persons are employed by another person (who may or may not be Portuguese) and that only eight are independent merchants or business owners in their own right. The number of Portuguese who own panaderias and refrescerias has diminished since 1955, since the take-overs by Arubans such as in the case of the Refresceria Benefica, San Nicolas which changed hands as of October 1968.

The Portuguese community on Aruba never was as large and as cohesive a unit as that on the island of Curacao which, during the mid-1950's had approximately three thousand inhabitants. Those living in Aruba have bought homes in the vicinity of Oranjestad if not actually living above stores and bakeries. Most attend the Catholic church of San Fransisco. They are devoutly Catholic in their observances of the religious holidays. They have regarded themselves as a group in that

they speak Portuguese but they have learnt Papiamentu and speak Spanish for business and trade. The original tradition had been to bring in Madeira women for the men who had immigrated single but this has since died out as more married local girls; inter-marriage increased in the late 1950's. Most of the Portuguese are poorly educated and some are illiterate; they live a Spanish way of life unhampered by Dutch rule and do not, for the most part, have any desire to become naturalized Dutch citizens. As residents(alien)s they have full political rights and the children are eligible for government scholarships.

In regard to the Aruban attitude towards the Portuguese one can say that it grew to be one of condescension and distrust; only in the last five years have some of the Arubans been able to accept the Portuguese as equals. Despite the fact that nearly every Aruban and Dutchman spoken to mention how industrious the Portuguese are, he would only acknowledge low manual employment as being their rightful station. But at present with the results of Portuguese business effort visible in the town streets, and the presence of Portuguese children competing in the schools, the attitudes are beginning to change. However for an Aruban to marry a Portuguese - that is still a matter asking for criticism from some quarters. As a twenty year old Aruban threw his meat bones through his ear window one evening, he declared that no matter "the Portuguese would clean them up in the morning".

The ethnic traditions of the Portuguese are few and far between, the community has never been large enough as a whole to credit a pronounced way of living and as a result of questioning individuals as to whether they could recall any event or life style particularly Portuguese , one mentioned the annual parade. On June 10 a celebration

is held honoring Louis de Camoes, Portuguese sailor and poet, consisting of a parade, a wreath-laying at the Queen Wilhemina statue, a reception with port-wine and street-dancing at night. Since not all Portuguese men who arrived single in Aruba have married immigrant women from Madeira and that some have even left wives back in Europe, the idea of having a close community group to perpetuate traditions of country of origin has never been strongly ~~perpetuated~~ ^{adhered to}, or even implemented by the people themselves.

As residents of the Netherlands Antilles, the Portuguese immigrants are aliens up until such time of their naturalization; according to the census bureau these individuals have not numbered more than a handful. The Portuguese men who entered, did so with the intention of returning at some later date. But the fact remains that, related some informants, although they speak of the future return journey few have actually undertaken it; more have returned in the last two years owing to the pressures of unemployment on the island rather than individual preference. Before the war when the island was most pressed for a higher total population, the children of such immigrants born on Aruba were Dutch citizens; since 1949 legislation has been passed that declares such offspring born on Aruba to be now expatriot Portuguese citizens. Ergo it would seem that this was a slight measure by the Dutch government on the Portuguese.

The ethnic group discussed here spoke Portuguese as their primary tongue as one might expect; for the majority of them it can be said that Spanish is their second, while they speak the former amongst themselves, the latter is used in business and travel. It should be noted that since there has been Portuguese immigrations to South America especially Brazil, there is much intra-continental travel between families.

Those who have worked themselves into business bigger than refresquerias and ice-cream-selling, have been required to learn English in order to benefit from the tourist trade. , and although older Portuguese do not speak Dutch their children do as a result of an Aruban education. Papiamentu, the creole language of the Netherlands Antilles has been learnt by the Portuguese interviewed and was said to be spoken by all the Portuguese on Aruba. It presented few difficulties owing to its non-complex grammar structure and its roots in the Spanish and Portuguese ~~languages~~ languages. The Portuguese have never regarded it as a sub-standard tongue or as an inferior one spoken by those of a lower social order partly because they originated in a low strata themselves. It can be said that the Portuguese are at home with Papiamentu and have easily incorporated it into their Aruban life.

On examination of the grammar and vocabulary of Papiamentu it is clear to see the close association it has with Spanish if one is familiar with the latter. However to find the Portuguese roots and similarities with Papiamentu of which the history-book, grammar-book and persons speak of is a little more difficult. One informant discussed a few words and phrases such as 'ainda' (yet) and 'zjeytu' (spark of life) as being the same in Portuguese as in Papiamentu; he also mentioned that the future grammatical appendage 'lo' is derived from 'logo', Portuguese for later. However further similarities were found by examination of dictionaries, that is by comparison of verbs in English, Papiamentu and Portuguese, which are listed in the following chart, fig. 1. Since Portuguese appears to be so closely connected to Spanish it sometimes is hard to decide whether Spanish or Portuguese was the original root of the Papiamentu word. In the book El Papiamentu by Rodolfo Ienz Papiamentu words in various categories were broken down according to origin, whether it was Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French or English; see Fig. 2.

Fig. 1.

English	Papiamentu	Portuguese
Appear	aparace	paracer
be	bai	ir-se
begin	ta	ser, estar, ficar
believe	cuminsa, comenza	comecar
bring	kere	crer
buy	trece	trazer
cost	cumpra	comprar
discover	costa	custar
divide	descubri	descrir
drink	divida	dividir
eat	bebe	beber
enter	come	comer
feel	drenta	entrar
forget	sinti	sentir
give	lubida	esquecer
hope	duna	dar
include	spera	esperar
learn	incliini	incluir
leave	sinja	aprender
listen	sali	deixar/partir
live	scucha	ouvir
lose	biba	morar
love	perde	perder
move	stima	amar
must	moor	mudar
meet	meste	dever
need	contra cu	conher
order	mester	precisar
pass	manda busca	mandar
pay	pasa	passar
purchase	paga	pagar
return	compra	comprar
say	bolbe	voltar
sell	bisa	dizer
smoke	bende	vender
start	huma	fumar
take	cuminsa	comecar
think	tuma	tomar
use	pensa/kere	pensar/crer
want	usa	empregar
win	spera	esperar
	gana	ganhar